



# EWES NEWS



Thanks to Kirsty McMurtrie for the great Spring photos!



## Spring Comment

**Dave Robertson BVSc BSc (Hons)**  
Oamaru Veterinary Centre

Spring is always an action filled season. The Veterinary Centre are here to support you through all you spring related animal health issues. Your problems are our business and we thrive on the challenge of improving outcomes for your animals. Our approach is practical, science-based and always with a pragmatic and sustainable view. Antibiotic usage and chemical use on farms seem to be scrutinised more these days. Fortunately your business and our business are well placed to meet these requirements and show the rest of the world how good our animal husbandry and welfare standards are. Our focus is on building relationships with

individual farmers and really understanding what animal health systems and inputs are required. Our sheep and beef team have had some really good feed back about our recent pre-lamb discussions and planned approach to animal health.

Short term considerations this spring

- Feeding twinning ewes. Prioritising stock classes (explore options for dry hogget grazing or mobs identified for all-counted sale).
- Making sure cows don't fall over with magnesium staggers (which happens on low intakes).
- Being responsive if it does rain and warm

up to parasite issues.

- Heifer health and growth rates for mating. BVD testing and/or vaccinating.
- The Veterinary Centre sheep and beef team have some exciting initiatives coming up. For example; The beef fertility equation and sheep genetics workshop in October. Details coming soon.

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## Digital Radiography for Ranfurly

We have exciting news from the Maniototo. The x-ray equipment at the Ranfurly clinic has been upgraded last month and is now equipped with state of the art digital radiography.

Sky, a 12 week old Huntaway pup, was presented at the Ranfurly clinic with a very sore foot after a little accident at home. With our new digital x-ray equipment high quality images were taken and he was diagnosed with multiple broken bones in his leg. The images were emailed to Oamaru for a second opinion and a suitable treatment plan was made within an hour. Ben's leg is now in a cast and he has a good prognosis as a working dog.



Ranfurly Vet Bridget Roulston working with Sky

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# “Newetrition”

Lucy Cameron BVSc BSc  
Waimate Veterinary Centre



## Iodine & Goitre



**Not just a brassica issue - these photos show goitre in lambs from pasture-fed ewes.**

It's essential for pregnant ewes to have adequate iodine intakes during mid to late pregnancy, or their lambs can develop goitre. Goitre is when

animals have enlarged thyroid glands due to iodine deficiency. Severe goitre will lead to stillbirths or weak lambs dying shortly after birth, but even mildly affected lambs can die if weather conditions are poor. **Iodine deficiency reduces their metabolic rate and ability to keep themselves warm.** We're all very aware of the risk of feeding brassicas over winter, but goitre can also occur on pasture – as these photos show.



▪ Monitor the iodine status of your flock by getting us to **post-mortem slinks** – by simply weighing the lamb and its thyroid gland we can detect deficiency. This is far more accurate than a blood test.

▪ Goitre is **not usually visible externally**. However it should be kept in mind as a cause for dead lambs which are often put down to mis-mothering or bad weather.

▪ If identified, affected lambs that survive can be treated with iodine, which may help recovery.

▪ **Prevent by giving iodine** (e.g. LSD) at scanning and pre-lamb, or Flexidine pre-mating.

Iodine deficiency can have devastating consequences – and right now is the ideal time to assess your farm situation – contact us to discuss how to do this.



## Sudden Death

Gwyneth Mark BVSc

Recently we have had some post mortem investigations of sudden death; causes of death have been identified:

### Listeriosis:

Ewes becoming ill and down after being feed silage, these ewes presented very unwell with diarrhoea. A post mortem found inflamed intestines and a uterine infection after abortion. The pathogen identified was listeria monocytogenes.

Important Factors:

- Listeria is present in silage which has been contaminated or exposed to the environment increasing silage PH.
- The edges of silage pits are most at risk of contamination.
- Listeria can cause nervous signs (circling, blindness, star-gazing), abortion and diarrhoea but not usually at the same time, all presentations can lead to death.
- Silage can be tested for listeria if there are concerns about its quality.

### Superphosphate Poisoning:

Sheep were off feed, uncoordinated and eventually became recumbent and died after grazing a paddock which had recently had fertiliser application.

Important factors:

- Pregnant and lactating Ewes in late winter/spring
- Grazing paddocks within 1 week of applying fertiliser especially in fine weather
- Hungry sheep grazing short pastures
- Can present similar to milk fever and respond to calcium temporarily

### Nitrate Poisoning:

A dead R2 found in a kale paddock, with others were acting drunk, had difficulty breathing and a few were recumbent. Diagnosis was made of nitrate poisoning; some recumbent cattle treated with methylene blue rapidly responded.

Important factors:

- Risk Period: low light (overcast), low temp, plant damage e.g. frosts, drought or after fert application
- Risk Crop: new permanent pasture (ryegrass), brassicas (turnips, kale, rape), cereal grasses e.g. green oats
- Critical factor is amount of nitrate consumed and how fast.
- Prevention: Don't put hungry animals on risky crops and test risk crops nitrate levels.

Nitrogen testing kits are available to purchase or we can run the nitrogen test for you before grazing potentially risky crops.

## Johnes Control in Ewes

Bridget Roulston BVSc  
Ranfurly Veterinary Centre



Ovine Johnes Disease (OJD) is a significant cause of mortality particularly in fine wool breeds, often seen as the old skinny ewe that wastes away despite good feeding and parasite control. A one off vaccination gives life-time protection. It is most commonly used in fine wool replacement ewe hoggets after shearing. This will prevent them shedding the bacteria and suffering from this wasting disease later in life. At > 1% losses to Johnes in a ewe flock 'Gudair' (Johnes) vaccine becomes economically attractive. Studies show in fine wool flocks the average ewe mortality from Johnes disease sits around 2.8%(and about 0.7% in crossbred flocks), making it a worthwhile vaccine for fine wool replacements. Correct and careful administration is required with this product. There is no longer any need to ear-mark vaccinated animals.





# Broodmare care

**Babiche Heil DVM, MSc., DipACT, MANZCVS**  
Ranfurly Veterinary Centre



Spring is coming which means the precious foals we all have been waiting for are close to being born and we need to start making a plan to get the dry/maiden mares bred this season.

A quick checklist for pregnant mares:

- Mare vaccination booster 6 weeks prior to foaling
- Mare worm drench 2 weeks prior to foaling
- Pregnant mare daily check udder
- Faecal egg count
- Foaling kit ready? Please contact us if in doubt.
- Identify your breeding goals (and contact us if you have any questions)
- Budget your breeding goals
- Contact us now if you would like to use frozen semen or embryo transfer

# Product of the month



## **Elanco** **Rumensin** **ANTI-BLOAT CAPSULES**

1. Monensin is a rumen modifier which changes the rumen microflora in such a way that bloat is prevented.
2. Rumensin treated cattle have 7% more energy released from the diet.
3. New Zealand trials have shown a 15% weight gain advantage in treated beef cattle.



# Metabolics at calving, not just a dairy issue

**Daley Watson-Krawitz BVSc**  
Waimate Veterinary Centre

Whilst metabolic issues are far less common in beef cows compared to dairy cows due to the amount of milk they are bred to produce, it does still happen.

By far the most common is low magnesium, also known as grass staggers.

The most common presentation in beef systems is unfortunately finding a dead cow, it is uncommon to find them in the clinical stages (staggering, aggressive, seizing) as the disease progresses quickly within hours.

Magnesium is required in adequate amounts every day in their diet as there is little capacity for mobilisation of the animal's own stores. As such there are two main reasons for low magnesium in cows at calving:

-The most common is starvation. Beef

cows calving early on bowling greens or set stocked on skinned out blocks with sheep can result in insufficient feed (and magnesium) intake.

-Short, lush, rapidly growing feed can also be low in magnesium and calving behind a wire on green feed can also result in not enough magnesium intake.

Prevention is to try and adequately feed the calving/lactating cow. This may be easier said than done this season with many farms experiencing low pasture covers coming into lambing/calving and little roughage about the farm. If possible, calving cows on rougher pasture may be better as although it is lower in energy it will have higher magnesium content than lush, short pasture. It is not until 2-4 months post calving when the beef cow needs significant increases in feed quantity

and quality to feed the calf and cycle for mating.

House cows or a dairy cross breed producing more milk may benefit from magnesium supplementation to help prevent milk fever and magnesium staggers. This could be in the form of a magnesium bullet 2-4 weeks pre-calve, Mag Chloride in water troughs or dusting Mag Oxide (50-60gm) on breaks or baleage.





# Ticking the boxes for heifer mating

Luke Smyth BVSc  
Oamaru Veterinary Centre

A beef herd will always be more profitable if heifers achieve good in calf rates. But what can we do now to achieve a good result?

To minimise the risk of failure, set and meet live weight targets.

**Heifers must be grown to a minimum of 300 kg LW before they go to the bull to ensure:**

- They have attained puberty and will be cycling.
- They are grown out enough to calve and re-breed successfully.
- You may choose to exclude light "tail

ender" heifers from the mating mob. Reaching adequate mating weights is about

1. Planning and monitoring growth rates.
2. Adequate feeding.
3. Parasites
  - ♦ Do the heifers need a drench coming out of the winter?
4. Adequate trace element status, around here Copper and Selenium supplementation is necessary.
  - Selovin LA injection.
  - Coppermax injection.
5. No BVD in the mob.

- ♦ Only buy bulls that are confirmed clear of and vaccinated for Bovine Viral Diarrhoea.
- ♦ Blood test the heifer mob for the presence of BVD.
- ♦ BVD vaccination of heifers may be the best option and heifers will require 2 doses prior to mating. The primary course consists of a sensitiser dose followed by a booster dose at least 4 weeks and up to 6 months later. Ideally the booster dose is given 2-4 weeks prior to the bull going out to maintain optimal immunity during pregnancy.

# Lamb Rearing - Heatwave-The ad lib way

Luke Smyth BVSc  
Oamaru Veterinary Centre



In farming we are always looking for areas where we can make improvements or reduce wastage. It is well known that increasing the potential lamb harvest on farm through improving lamb survival and triplet management is an area where gains can be made. But

what is the cost of that extra effort to rear orphan lambs or more intensively shepherding your flock?

*We talk to Jo Hay Hay about how she manages the challenges of rearing orphan lambs*

*Jo is into her 3rd season using a Heatwave lamb feeder and it has changed the way she views rearing extra lambs. Ross and Jo are targeting a 160% tailing %ge with better lamb survival being a key part of this.*

*Last year Jo reared more than 70 orphan lambs. Lambing has already started but Jo has no pet lambs yet!*

*Lambs do a lot better and it is much less hassle. I've now got time to move breaks, do a lambing beat and find more lambs to feed. It mimics what happens naturally. Lambs are never completely emptied out, so always have energy in the system to grow optimally. Because the stomach is full the lambs look lovely and even, they are quieter in the shed and don't gorge and blow-up like they can on a twice-daily feed bottle fed system.*

*The work required is to mix cold milk once per day and clean the piping through with water and alkali (5 minutes and very easy).*

## **What milk powder?**

*I use Sprayfo, a whey based milk powder. It prevents bloat deaths at that 3-6 week stage and in the 4 years I've been using it I haven't had any bloat. It works well due to its ease of mixing, but it is very important to mix the milk cold.*

## **Meal and quality grass**

*To make lamb rearing "stack-up" getting lambs onto meal/muesli seems is critical. This develops the rumen environment faster. On a per kg of energy basic meal is 1/3rd the price of milk replacer.*

*Jo's lambs are weaned off milk at 16-17kg liveweight, but stay on meal until around 25kg liveweight.*

*Quality spring grass for orphan lambs will ensure best results.*

## **Top tips from Jo:**

- Spray lambs navals with 10% iodine in the paddock and then again when they come into the lamb pens. This will decrease the number of lambs which develop joint ill.
- Feed colostrum 4 x a day from a bottle to the new arrivals in the lamb pens. Tube lambs for the first feed if they don't drink straight away. If lambs are robust they can often go onto the Heatwave feeder after 24hours.
- Always have water and meal available once the lambs are on the Heatwave feeder. Lambs drink a lot more water than you think.
- Tail, scratch for scabby mouth and give 5 in 1 vaccine before weaning lambs off milk. This helps prevent any growth checks with tailing.
- Keep the chooks, birds and adult sheep out of the lamb meal.
- Don't forget hygiene of the lamb pens. I use Stalasan powder and reapply it every 5 days.



John Lee Waikura Coopworths, North Otago, studies the scanning docket for his hoggets showing 149% - an exceptional result. Most of the hoggets were in very good order this year going to the ram. This result is in-line with the Massey research findings the in-lamb and twinning rate increases significantly when more hoggets are greater the 50kg at mating.





# EWES NEWS



## Custom farm specific footrot vaccine update

**Dave Robertson BVSc BSc (Hons)**  
Oamaru Veterinary Centre

It was over a year ago that Professor Om Dhungyel from Sydney University inspired us with his story of eradicating footrot from Nepal using customised vaccine. We have finally swathed our way through the application processes and have officially started trials on the custom footrot vaccine. This is to run over 2 years on 7 properties. We want to get some good data around the vaccine effects and whether it can really be an effective alternative to controlling or eliminating the footrot disease.

We have permits for commercial use of vaccine. So if you can't wait for trial results and summary and want to test the customised vaccine in you flock you need to :

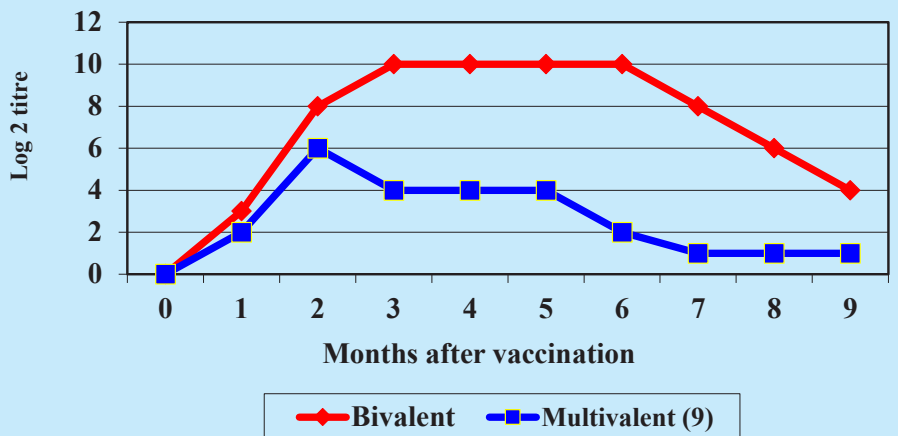


- Swab infected feet to identify what strain(s) of footrot are on your farm.
  - Order specific recombinant vaccine for use on a sample mob to test effect.
  - If test mob effect is good, then apply to the whole flock in the Autumn.
- Keeper hoggets post-shearing are a good class to target with vaccine at this time of year. If it

works well then you can apply to ewes post weaning. All the strain testing and vaccine production is through Australia. Below is a graph of the Australian work on vaccine antibody response in sheep. The benefit of the custom vaccine is the longer protection to the sheep (up to 8 months and is also curative of existing infection).



**Graph 1. Antibody levels comparing a 2 strain custom vaccine versus footvax (9 strain)**







# Bearings - The \$350 emergency

**Dave Robertson BVSc BSc (Hons)**  
Oamaru Veterinary Centre



That is the value of a mixed age ewe with twins. We are getting past the

The key thing is to get them back in within a day of finding them without damage to the tissue or bladder. In order to get good outcomes for bearing replacement daily shepherding is required. The main cause of poor outcomes with bearings is ruptured bladder, kidney failure and septicaemia. Burst bearings are not going to be viable and best humanely euthanased.

Use of penicillin not mandatory. If stitching is required or if bruised or crusty then yes I would. If fresh and cleanly replaced without too much trauma I wouldn't treat with antibiotics. Taking the bearing ewes home to a hospital paddock and monitoring until they lamb is worth it. Have a system of marking bearing ewes for culling. They are likely to do it again next year.

**The improved Adlam Harness** offers quick and easy fitting. The plastic tubing that crosses over the vulva doesn't interfere with defaecation or lambing. The harness can be used for tethering and mothering on also. The harness is an effective and animal friendly method to save bearing ewes and the multiple lambs they are carrying.

**Bearing retainers** work well. They are preferred over stitching prior to lambing.

preventative stage with bearings. So now we just have to deal with them.

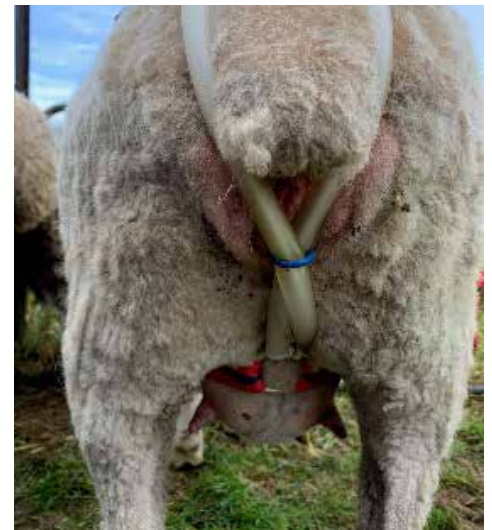
## Treatment

For some farmers all bearing ewes die, others have a reasonable success rate. There are various methods (retainers, stitching, harnesses).

The difference in outcome is having a system for prompt and calm treatment.



**The Adlam bearing harness can be used for bearing retention and mothering on lambs**



# Scabby Mouth

As tailing approaches so does the most practical opportunity to vaccinate against scabby mouth. This is not new but it is timely to go over the basics to ensure your procedures are giving you an effective vaccination programme.

- Scabby mouth infects animals through breaks in the skin resulting in raised red lesions and scabs. Infections can occur anywhere on the body with the mouth, feet, udders and the poll of rams being very common. Lamb infection results in significant effects on weight gains.
- Lambs are most susceptible over their first summer so tailing is the most practical time to vaccinate. Don't use the vaccine on farms that are free of the disease.
- The best place to give the vaccination is the inside of the back leg unless fly

treatments are being used, in which case the inside of the front leg should be used.

- The vaccine is given by scratching the skin but don't scratch so firmly as to draw blood. A blue dye is added to the vaccine so you can see where it has been applied.
- Check the vaccination area of 20 lambs 7-10 days after vaccination to ensure that it has taken. A take is a raised whitish line surrounded by an area of inflammation.
- Keep the vaccine in a fridge until it is used and only take enough for the day. During use keep it in a chilly bag and out of direct sunlight.
- As scabby mouth can infect humans (orf) don't touch lesions or prick yourself with the vaccine.

